1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Muddu Rāja (1633–86), the grandson of the founder of the dynasty of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas, moved the capital from Hālēri to Mercara in 1681, and this continues to be the capital today. It is not certain whether it was Muddu Rāja or his son Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II) who reorganized the administration, altering the existing *nāḍ*[1] boundaries and creating a clear hierarchy of headmen (*takkas*), and four appellate courts (*paṭṭis*) for the settlement of disputes.

The consolidation of the authority of the Rājas which began with the founder was completed only during the time of his great grandson Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II). During the latter's reign we hear of the efforts of Uttu Nāyaka, a chieftain in Armēri in Beppunāḍ, to get the country invaded from the south by Kōṭangaḍi Vīra Varma while Vīra Rāja II was defending the country from the Mysoreans in the east. Vīra Rāja II was luckily able to beat off both the eastern and southern invaders.

The struggle between Mysore and Coorg which began during the time of the Hoysaḷas and continued till the end of the reign of Vīra Rāja II assumed a particularly severe form in the latter half of the eighteenth century, after the usurpation of the Mysore throne by Haider Ali. The severity reached its climax during the reign of Tippu Sultan, Haider's son, and only ended with his death in 1799. Coorgs fought repeatedly for their king and country against the invaders, paying a heavy price for their loyalty.

Haider conquered Bēḍnūr in 1763, and he seems to have thought that this entitled him to suzerainty over Coorg, a claim which he tried to assert by force as well as cunning. In the complicated struggle between him and the Rājas of Coorg, he does not seem to have made any considerable progress so long as the question of succession to the Coorg throne was clear and undisputed.

But the death in 1770 of Muddu Rāja II and Muddayya Rāja, who were both jointly ruling Coorg as representatives of the different segments of the dynasty of Lingāyaṭ Rājas, gave rise to succession disputes between Linga Rāja I, younger brother of Muddu Rāja II, and Dēvappa Rāja, son of Muddayya Rāja. Dēvappa Rāja was successful in the struggle, and the unsuccessful Linga Rāja I sought the help of Haider, who was eagerly waiting for such an opportunity. Haider helped Linga Rāja I to ascend the Mercara throne, and after the latter's death in 1780 he assumed

[1] Coorg was traditionally divided into thirty-five *nāḍs*, each *nāḍ* containing several villages.

175 [63]

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Some were left free to look after land, and even those who were posted on guard duties were posted near their fields.

Jamma tenure conferred a double prestige on the holder in addition to the undoubted economic advantage. It signified that the holder had his roots in Coorg, and the duty of rendering military service to the state in times of emergency conferred on him the second type of prestige. The other important tenure in Coorg was *sāgu*, in which not only was land assessed at ten rupees per hundred *bhaṭṭis* of land, being twice the rate for *jamma* land, but also the holder was liable to render every type of service to the state except military service. During Richter's time, but for forty Coorgs, all the people holding land on *sāgu* tenure were non-Coorgs.[1]

The Rājas occasionally granted land on *jamma* tenure to non-Coorgs as a special mark of favour. Occasionally, Coorgs who held land on *jamma* tenure were transferred to the *sāgu* class as punishment for wrongs done by them.

VI

During the two centuries of rule by the Rājas, Coorg underwent a number of changes, political, administrative, and social. The authority of the local chieftains or Nāyakas was destroyed and the administration was centralized. The Rājas established a postal service (*anché*) for the use of officials only. Land was surveyed thoroughly, and the type of tenure under which each farm was held was recorded in the *Hukum Nāma* of Linga Rāja II (1811–20). The *Hukum Nāma* also contained a few paragraphs dealing with the powers of officials to try cases, civil and criminal, without reference to the Rāja. Serious offences like adultery, murder, and treason were tried by the Rāja himself. The recognition of the authority of the headman of a village and his council of elders was a general feature of the administrative system of the Rājas. They also recognized the authority of caste elders to try and settle caste disputes.

The long and bitter struggle with Haider and Tippu increased the sense of national identity of the inhabitants of Coorg. Coorgs played an important part in this struggle as they formed the bulk of the Rājas' soldiery, and also because they were specially selected for barbarous treatment by Tippu Sultan.

[1] Op. cit., p. 406.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

indolent will then have to work for subsistence or sink into misery, the industrious and thrifty will prosper and after a period of no little angry strife a happier life of personal freedom and domestic felicity will be the inheritance of future generations. [1]

One of the first reforms introduced by the British was the abolition of slavery. Every high-caste landholder had apportioned to him, from ancient times, one or more families of slaves according to the size of his estate. These slaves belonged to a very low caste like the Poleyas. The legal abolition of slavery did not, however, materially affect the landholders, many of whom were Coorgs. But when, in the fifties of the last century, coffee plantations were opened up all over Coorg and there was a sudden demand for coolie labour, many of the slaves deserted their former masters to work for cash wages on the plantations. It was only then that the condition requiring a person holding land on the *jamma* tenure not to sublet his land was relaxed to the extent of permitting him to sublet a fourth of his estate.

Before the coming of coffee, rice was not only the staple crop, but also the chief commercial crop, as not many people owned the evergreen forests where cardamom throve. The cultivation of rice was the most important concern of every landholding joint family and its slave-families. Excess of rice was disposed of in Malabar where articles not available in Coorg were bought.

As a food crop rice has an intrinsic importance which no purely commercial crop can adversely affect, but coffee soon took a place next only to rice in its importance. It is necessary to mention here that the cultivation of coffee, in the beginning at any rate, was subject to the hazards of destruction by pests like the 'bug' and 'borer'. It was also bound up with the vagaries of a world market.

Coffee changed the face of Coorg. It brought in European planters who settled down all over Coorg; it cut the bonds binding the slaves to their traditional masters; it induced the seasonal inflow of labour from Mysore and South Canara, and finally it brought money to the planter as well as to the labourers on the plantations and to the total community.

The annexation of Coorg by the British did not mean a complete break with past administration. The British administrative system was at first based on the old system, and the modifications intro-

[1] Op. cit., p. 130.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

duced were few and far between. The authority of village elders and of the hereditary village headman was recognized and the established administrative institutions were continued.

This phase, however, ended soon after 1858 when the administration of India was taken over by the British Government from the East India Company. Coorg then became part of the territories administered directly by the British in India and of the elaborate administrative and judicial machinery stretching over the whole of India. Numerous Acts like the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, and Indian Stamp Act applied to every part of India including Coorg.

Under the British, Coorg was a Chief Commissioner's Province, a position which continues even today. Until 1942 the British Resident in Mysore State was also the Chief Commissioner of Coorg, and Coorg was governed from Bangalore, the headquarters of the Resident. In 1942, the two offices of Resident of Mysore and Chief Commissioner of Coorg were separated and a distinguished Coorg, Dewan Bahadur Kēṭōḷira Chengappa was appointed Chief Commissioner. Below the Chief Commissioner was the Superintendent who lived in Coorg. A legislative council consisting of twenty members (fifteen elected and five nominated), presided over by the Chief Commissioner, was constituted in 1924. The council had the right to vote on the budget, move resolutions, and ask supplementary questions.

A NOTE ON SLAVERY IN COORG

Slavery was widely prevalent in pre-British Coorg. The slaves and agricultural labourers did most of the actual work of the farm under the supervision of their masters who held the land from the state on one of the several forms of tenure prevalent in Coorg. The number of slaves in 1834, when the British annexed Coorg, was estimated at 6,089, but we do not know whether this included the slaves on the Rāja's farms (or *paṇyas*), who were variously estimated at 1,757, 1,720, 1,500, and 1,233.

Slaves were referred to as *jammada āḷu* (or '*jamma* servants'),[1] and there were two classes of slaves, one praedial, called *bhūmi jammada āḷu* (*bhūmi* = land), and the other personal, called *okkalu*

[1] It probably meant that they were slaves of the man holding land on *jamma* tenure.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

are also required to render help. For instance, at a funeral the womenfolk of the 'friendly' *okka* were required to cook and serve food to the mourners.

XII

No reference has been made so far to territorial groups in Coorg except for mentioning, in Section V, an instance of the co-operation that prevails between the various castes living in a village or *nāḍ* during the harvest festival. The village is the smallest and most important of the territorial groups, and the *nāḍ*, consisting of several villages is the next bigger group. Traditionally Coorg was divided into thirty-five *nāḍs* and twelve *kombus*. A *kombu* literally means 'horn' or 'branch', and in the administrative context it means the area covered by the sound of a brass horn. It is not known what purpose was served by this unit. The twelve *kombus* together formed the kingdom of Coorg ruled by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas.

It has already been mentioned that a village in Coorg Proper is not as physically compact as a village in the eastern plains. But this does not make it any the less real. The village acts as a unit on certain occasions and its unity obtains ritual expression. The people of a village have a great attachment for it. Besides, every village has a council of elders, and the council is presided over by the *ūr takka* or village headman, whose office is hereditary. The headmanship (or any other traditional office) is always conceived of as belonging to a certain *okka* and not to an individual.

Like the village, the *nāḍ* is a unit which corresponds to the sentiments of the people, and is not merely an administrative division imposed by the Rājas. The number of villages in a *nāḍ* varies from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ*: there are 11 villages in Bēngunāḍ, 5 in Ballatnāḍ, 16 in Kaḍiyetnāḍ, 10 in Eḍénālknāḍ, and 9 in Mūrnāḍ. These are ancient *nāḍs*, but the boundary of a *nāḍ* has frequently been changed in the past. It was changed, for instance, when the entire administration of the country was reorganized by either Muddu Rāja (1638–86) or his son Doḍḍa Vīrappa (Vīra Rāja II, 1687–1736). The number of *nāḍs* remained 35 as before, but their boundaries were changed. Subsequently, under the British, the number of *nāḍs* were reduced successively to 28, 24, 19, and 11.

The headman of a *nāḍ* is called *nāḍ takka*, and while every

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

631
634

3. Map showing Administrative Divisions in *circa* 1850

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Above the *nāḍ*-headmen there are *simé*- (or *dēsha*-) headmen, of whom there are eight in all. The *simé*-headman has precedence over the *nāḍ*-headman at a gathering where both are present.

The division of the country into twelve *kombus* or 'horns', and the establishment of four *paṭṭis* (literally, the open paved yard before a Coorg's house) or courts for hearing appeals from village and *nāḍ*-assemblies, appear to be only administrative devices imposed from above, and not traditional institutions of the people which functioned vigorously. The *dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ*, a folksong which gives an account of the administrative system introduced by either Muddu Rāja or Doḍḍa Vīrappa,[1] mentions the existence of twelve *kombus*, and gives a list of the eight *simé*-headmen and four appellate courts. A caution should be entered here against treating this song as evidence of the system as it actually existed. The picture it presents is too tidy and systematized, and it is not improbable that it sacrifices accuracy for neatness and order.

It is likely that before Coorg was conquered by the Lingāyaṭ Rājas the biggest territorial unit was a group of two or three or more *nāḍs* led by a chief who called himself Nāyaka. The chiefs constantly fought among themselves, and this made it easier for the Lingāyaṭ Rājas to conquer them and extend their authority over the whole of Coorg.

Two or three *nāḍs* seem to have also come together for purposes of defence against a common enemy, for hunting, and for hearing appeals from the decisions of lower assemblies like the village-assembly and *nāḍ*-assembly. It is interesting to note, however, that while folklore contains occasional references to an appeal to an assembly composed of the men of two or three *nāḍs*, there is no reference to an appeal to a *paṭṭi*, one of the four appellate courts mentioned in the *dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ*.

XIII

The village represents a different type of solidarity from caste. The latter stresses the ties prevalent between members of the same caste scattered in different villages, whereas the former stresses the ties of the different castes living in the same village. Caste stresses the importance of the high castes and more or less ignores the lowest castes. When a Coorg says that when there is a wedding

[1] N. Chinnappa, op. cit., p. 29.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

When the fortunes of a *nāḍ* were at a low ebb, the elders of that *nāḍ* went on a pilgrimage to the patron-deity of the *nāḍ* and prayed to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

Legends grew up about a hero. Chegeṭṭira Appaṇṇa is supposed to have accomplished everything he did before he was sixteen days old. The hero had power to curse. After he died, he became a powerful spirit, a *bīra*.

The boundary of a *nāḍ* obtains importance on some ritual occasions. A groom passing in state through a *nāḍ* to the bride's village is given the 'plantain honour' at the boundary of the *nāḍ*.

Richter describes a custom which brings out the ritual importance of the *nāḍ*-boundary:

> In cases of sore afflictions befalling a whole village or *nāḍ* such as small-pox, cholera, cattle-disease, the ryots [peasants] combine to appease the wrath of Māriamma [the goddess Māri who presides over these epidemics] by collecting contributions of pigs, rice, coconuts, bread and plantains, from the different houses and depositing them at the *mandu* [green]; whence they are carried in a procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the *nāḍ*-boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by those composing the procession. The people of adjoining villages and *nāḍs* repeat the ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ* and, at last, expelled from the country.[1]

X

There is no social unit among Coorgs which is without a head. Every *okka* has a headman and the headman's wife is the head of the women in the *okka*. A temple has a headman with a number of officials under him. A village has a village-headman, and above the village is the *nāḍ*, and every *nāḍ* has at least one *nāḍ*-headman, and frequently more than one. The highest category of headmen are, however, the headmen of *sīmé* or *désha*, of whom there are eight in all.

Coorgs have a keen sense of discipline, which is associated in

[1] *Manual of Coorg*, p. 170.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

with the arrow and stay where it fell. The arrow struck into a mango tree at Ponnangála in the village of Yawakkapádi. Ponnangálatamma, assuming the shape of a crane, flew towards Ponnangála. Near the Karatandra house some Holeyas were working in the paddy fields. Ponnangálatamma flew upon one of them, who became possessed with a devil, and ran towards the tree, in which the arrow was sticking. The brothers afterwards separated into different villages, where they settled. The whole family were afterwards worshipped as gods. Beytúrappa has a temple at Beytur in Malabar, the second in Taliparambu in Malabar, the third in the Maletambira forest in the Chómamale in Coorg, the fourth on the Iguttappa-hill near Kunjila, the fifth at Pálúr in Kuyangérinád, the sixth, Tirnalli-Timmeya at Tirnally in the Wynád. A temple was also built for Ponnangálatamma round the tree, where the arrow had stuck. At her annual feast, in April, Ponnangálatamma weeps, and is worshipped by the Holeyas. The arrow is, up to the present day, seen sticking in the wild mango tree.

Regarding the ancient government of Coorg the popular tradition states, that the country was divided into 12 Kómbus (districts) and 35 Náds (subdivisions) ruled over by petty chiefs, called Náyakas who lived in constant feuds amongst themselves and gradually succumbed to the wily encroachments of the Hálcri-Polygars about whom more anon.

3. CONJECTURES REGARDING THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE COORGS.

In the absence of any reliable records prior to the Mussulman historian Ferishta who at the end of the 16th century casually mentions, that Coorg was governed by its own princes, our conjectures regarding its history anterior to this period are but guesses at the truth, based upon collateral circum-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

the old government since so well known as Zemindars or Polygars.

Up to this time the little Coorg country seems to have been of no political importance. Its chiefs, called Náyakas, ruled over their small Kómbus (districts), levied taxes within their dominions, which they guarded by boundary and defensive ditches (the Cadangas) and to assert and maintain their self-constituted importance they engaged in frequent feuds amongst themselves. The Keimatta or ancestral monument of the Achu-Náyaka of Anjigheri-nád in Kiggatnád taluq is still in good preservation. The family was exterminated about 60 years ago. Of the Beppunád chiefs the name of Utta Náyaka of the Arméri house is still in popular remembrance. In Padinalknád the name of Karanembáu, the chief at Bhágamandala is mentioned with veneration. There may have been more Náyakas, and very likely one over each of the 12 Kómbus or districts, but the names of their houses are no longer known.

According to the Ráya Paddhati in Dr. Francis Buchanan's "Journey from Madras through Mysore etc." vol. III. p. 125, one of the chief Polygars, who on the decline of Vijayanagara assumed independence, was Sadásiva, the son of the Gauda of Kilidi or Ikeri. Being endowed with a government comprising Guty, Bárakuru, and Mangalúru, his name was changed into Sadásiva-Ráya-Náyaka and he and his descendants, who were styled Rájas of Kilidi or Ikeri, possessed the government for 203 years (from 1559-60 to 1762-63 A. D.)

From intelligent Coorgs I have learnt, that during the reign of this neighbouring dynasty an Ikeri prince came to Coorg, and settled in Hálerinád. At first he assumed the pious garb of a Jangam or Lingaite priest and as such gained a considerable influence over the people of the surrounding Náds. When feeling sure of his position, he imposed upon

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

B. THE ADMINISTRATION OF COORG.

1. SUBDIVISION OF COORG FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSES, SKETCH OF THE SEVERAL TALUQS AND TOWNS.

631 [177] On the assumption of Coorg by the British Government, the existing administrative organisation of the country, hallowed by age and routine, was as little as possible interfered with; but in progress of time such changes took place, as were deemed necessary for the better administration of the [184] province. At present Coorg is divided into six taluqs and twenty-four náds, each of which is again subdivided into grámas or villages, which in "Coorg Proper" are made up of a number of vargas or farms rather, than of a number of houses joined into one community, for, as already observed, the Coorgs live on detached farms. In Yélusávirashímo— and part of Nanjarájpatna-taluq, the subdivisions are denominated "Hoblis" instead of náds, and in these two taluqs the greatest number of regular villages is found.

631 128 131 632 103 In the following table the divisions of Coorg are exhibited, together with the area in square miles, the number of villages and the seat of the Kacheri of each taluq and nád, from which statement it will be seen, that Coorg on an area of 1585 square miles contains 508 villages besides the towns: Mádapet (Mercara), Vírájpet, Fraserpet, Sómwárpet, Kodlipet and Ponnappet.

/Specific information on the duties of the Rajahs as heads of the Coorg state will be found in category 643./